

A culturally responsive organization is one that is relevant to participants of diverse cultural backgrounds and respectful of their beliefs, practices and values. The capacity to respond to the needs of diverse communities requires cultural knowledge, skills and values at all levels, from individual staff, to programs, organizations and systems. Cultural responsiveness is becoming more important for organizations. As communities across the state are increasingly diverse, organizations are finding that the cultural background of their leaders and staff are very different from participants in their programs. Considering these demographic changes, cultural responsiveness is crucial for ensuring that programs are effective and accessible to community members. Hiring staff who have that cultural knowledge, skills, and values is a critical means of ensuring this cultural responsiveness. One way to evaluate an applicant's cultural and linguistic competence is to design interview questions that will help the hiring panel explore a candidate's experience with and attitudes towards culturally and linguistically competent practices.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO GUAGE CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Use these sample questions to build interviews that help assess a job candidate's knowledge and skills related to cultural competence. The questions have not been tested, nor does use of these questions guarantee a candidate is knowledgeable or skilled related to an organization's specific cultural competency goals.

1. How do you perform a cultural assessment as part of your interaction with clients/patients/consumers?
2. Describe a time you negotiated a treatment plan with a client/patient/consumer in order to address his/her cultural beliefs or practices.
3. Share something you have learned about another culture through working with diverse clients/patients/consumer.
4. Describe a time you worked effectively with an interpreter.
5. Describe a time you heard someone make a prejudiced or inaccurate comment about a cultural group. How did you handle it?
6. Describe a project, interaction, or experience that would demonstrate your commitment to diversity and equity?
7. What do you do to stay current about developments in the field of diversity and equity?
8. This job will require interaction with people who are of diverse cultural backgrounds. Describe a time when you have encouraged this and how you handled it.

**IF CANDIDATES STATE THEY
ARE BILINGUAL AND YOU WILL
BE USING THEIR BILINGUAL
SKILLS IN THE WORKPLACE...**

Ask each candidate about her level of proficiency in English and the foreign language sought. It is also a good idea to conduct a conversational test during the interview using a bilingual interview panelist who has a known proficiency level. Part of the interview should include written exercises to test literacy levels. If you do not have any written exercises, contact the Office of Cultural and Linguistic Competence for recommendations.

9. What is the worst cross-cultural blunder you have committed? What would you do differently today?
10. Describe a time when you were required to work with a multicultural group of people to bring out divergent opinions and state a consensus. Did you agree with the consensus? If not, what did you do about it?
11. Describe a cross-cultural problem which you solved on your last or current job and how you arrived at the solution.
12. Please share any experience you have in working with individuals from backgrounds different from yours. How would this experience translate to working within a health care environment and with consumers?
13. What are some of the challenges you have encountered in working with consumers from diverse populations?
14. Do you have experience working with individuals with Limited English Proficiency?
15. What languages do you speak? If language other than English is offered, ask about proficiency (conversational, fluent, read, write, etc.) and if the proficiency has been tested.
16. Have you worked with interpreters? If yes, in what capacity and what was your scope of involvement?
17. Are you knowledgeable about a specific culture such that you could serve a mentor role in teaching other staff about that culture?
18. If you suspected a consumer was experiencing challenges (not following treatment plan, missing appointments, etc.) due to cultural preferences, what steps would you take to understand their preferences?
19. Have you ever participated in cultural competency training? Please describe the experience.
20. Have you ever participated, or worked in an organization that participated in a CLAS- or other organization-wide assessment of culturally and linguistically services?
21. How would you go about building rapport with a patient who is from a background different from yours?

TIPS AND WARNINGS

- To help weed out candidates, advertise in a job announcement that you will conduct an oral and written examination.
- Bear in mind that an applicant's first language may not be English, even if she speaks the language without a foreign accent. Therefore, it may be a good idea to have candidates complete written tests in English and the foreign language.
- While you can ask how an individual learned a language, do not ask a job candidate about her country of origin or ethnicity. A candidate may deem such questions as violations of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, which states that you cannot base a hiring decision on an individual's race, country of origin, gender, age or family background.

For more information, visit <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/2008CLC/documents/clc-CreateCulturLingCompDivWkforce.pdf> or contact Cecily Rodriguez at Cecily.rodriguez@dbhds.virginia.gov

References

- The Fordyce Letter; Bilingual Preferred: Tips for Recruiting...; Astrid Rial; November 2006

Resources

- Duke University Medical Center; Pilot Project Calls for Hiring Bilingual... ; Megan Bode; April 2007
- <http://hire-performance-radio.podcastpeople.com/posts/4990>